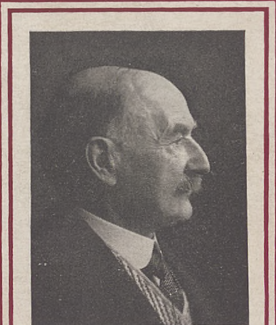
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S HARDY

Notes on His Life and Work

Containing a Critical Essay *by* Henry Seidel Canby, Tributes *from* Eminent American *and* English Authors, a Biographical Sketch, *a brief* Bibliography, *Etc.*



"The most modern of the moderns"

Harper & Brothers, Publishers
Established 1817

"Tess's Country"



THOMAS HARDY

Notes on His Life and Work

Publishers
Harper & Brothers
New York and London

Biblioteka Jagiellońska
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HAP

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: "Thou suffering
thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!"

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

B 773828

From Wessex Poems

niniejszą książkę
wzbogacił zbiory Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego
Szymon Stanisław Deptuła
emigrant z Polski

BIBLIOTHECA UNIV. JAGIELL. CRACOVIENSIS

The Novelist of Pity[1]

BY HENRY S. CANBY

TO those interested in the meaning of the generation that has now left us quivering on the beach of after war, Thomas Hardy's books are so engrossing that to write of them needs no pretext. Long familiarity with Hardy's novels had led to an afternoon of conversation with the author himself in the mildness of old age. But he remained for me a still inexplicable figure, belonging to an earlier century, yet in other respects so clearly abreast, if not ahead, of the emotions of our own times, that at eighty he saw the young men beginning to follow him. The danger, so I had thought and think, is that Hardy bids fair to become a legendary figure with an attribute, as is the way with such figures, better known than the man himself. "Hardy, oh yes, the pessimist" threatens to become all the schoolboys knows and all he needs to know of him, and his alleged philosophy of gloom is already

[1] From *Definitions; First Series.* Reprinted by courtesy of the author and of Harcourt, Brace & Company.

overshadowing the man's intense interest in strong and appealing life. It has been the fate of many a great artist to get a nickname, like a boy, and never be rid of it.

I do not wish by any ingenious fabrication to prove that Hardy was not a pessimist. He is the father of the English school that refuse to be either deists or moralists, and, like them, pushes his stories to an end that is often bitter. His temperament is cast in that brooding, reflective mood that concerns itself less readily with jollity than with grief, and is therefore ever slanting toward pessimism. This, even his style indicates. Like the somber Hawthorne's, his style is brooding, adumbrative, rather than incisive or brilliant. Yet the most important fact about Hardy is not that he is pessimistic.

His manner of telling a story, however, helps to confirm the popular impression. Hardy's plots are a series of accidents, by which the doom of some lovely or aspiring spirit comes upon it by the slow drift of misfortune. Tess, Grace, Eustacia, Jude—it is clear enough to what joys and sorrows their natures make them liable. But the master prepares for them trivial error, unhappy coincidence, unnecessary misfortune, until

it is not surprising if the analytic mind insists that he is laboring some thesis of pessimism to be worked out by concrete example.

Nevertheless, this is incomplete definition, and it is annoying that the dean of letters in our tongue should be subjected to a sophomoric formula in which the emphasis is wrongly placed. The critics, in general, have defined this pessimism, stopped there, and said, this is Hardy. But youth that does not like pessimism reads Hardy avidly. More light is needed.

Mr. Hardy himself does not suggest the simple and melancholy pessimist. A mild old man, gentleness is the first quality one feels in him, but at eighty he still waxed his mustache tips, and his eyes lit eagerly. I remember how earnestly he denied knowledge of science, piqued, I suppose, by the omniscient who had declared that his art consisted of applying the results of scientific inquiry to the study of simple human nature. If his treatment of nature was scientific, as I affirmed, his wife agreed, and he did not deny, then, he implied, his knowledge came by intuition, not by theory.

He told me he had little faith in mere observation, except for comic or quaint characterization.

He had seldom if ever studied a serious character from a model. One woman he invented entirely (was it Tess?) and she was thought to be his best.

Hardy definitely belongs to his age, the later nineteenth century, in spite of his reachings forward. On the one hand, his very gentleness is characteristic of a period that was above all others humane. On the other, his somber moods sprang from a generation that was the first to understand the implications of the struggle for life in the animal world all about them. They, to be sure, deduced from what they saw a vague theory of evolution in which the best (who were themselves) somehow were to come out best in the end. He, though gentle as they were, deduced nothing so cheerful, saw rather the terrible discrepancies between fact and theory, so that his very gentleness made him pessimistic, where Browning was optimistic. Then, like Hawthorne in the generation before him, Hardy went back to an earlier, simpler life than his own, and there made his inquiries. Hawthorne, who did not accept the theology of Puritanism, was yet strangely troubled by the problem of sin. Hardy, accepting the implacability of evolution without

its easy optimism, was intensely moved to pity. This is his open secret.

The Spirit of the Years[1] (which is another name for Hardy's reflections upon life and history) planned in sad conviction of the "blank entrancement" of the Great Foresightless Will, those sad narratives in which innocence, as in "Tess of the d'Urbervilles," is crushed, or vivid personality frustrated, as in "The Return of the Native." It is the Spirit of Pities in Hardy which wrote the stories. Philosophy constructed them, but pity worked them out.

The characters that Hardy loved—Grace, Marty South, Jude, Tess—are life, brooding, intense, potential, and lovely, struggling against a fate which they help to draw upon themselves, but which is, nevertheless, not necessary, not rational. The cruelty of this fate he assumes and depicts, but the stories are not told to describe it. It is his creatures that get the color, the interest; they are valuable to us, and would be to him, whatever the truth of his philosophy. But because he loves life, the living thing, even the lizard in the woods, he broods upon their frustrations.

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[1] In *"The Dynasts."*

Pessimistic Hardy is, as any gentle heart would be who chose to study misfortune; yet pessimist is not the right term for him. Realist he is clearly, in the philosophic sense of one who is willing to view things as they are without prejudice. I seek a term for a mild spirit who sees clearly that the sufferer is more intelligible than his fate, and so is pitiful even when most ruthless in the depiction of misfortune. Pity for the individual, not despair of the race, is his motive. And pity makes his gentle style, pity makes him regardless of artifice and gives his often clumsy novels an undercurrent which sweeps them beyond technical masterpieces whose only merit is sharpness of thought. It is instructive to compare the relative fortunes of Hardy and Meredith, once always bracketed—the apostle of pity in comparison with the most subtle and brilliant mind of his time. Hardy has outranked him.

Already it begins to appear that the inconsistent, half-conscious Will that was the sum and substance of Hardy's pessimism was given certain attributes of gloom that scarcely belonged to it. The ruthless struggle for life by which the fittest for the circumstances of the moment, and by no means the best, survive at the expense of

the others is no longer conceived as the clear law of human life. Science, with the rediscovery of Mendelism and its insistence upon psychological factors, has submitted important qualifications to this deduction which Hardy, in common with others intellectually honest of his age, was forced to make. But it is not Hardy's philosophy, sound or unsound, that counts in his art, except in so far as it casts the plan of his stories, or sometimes, as in "Tess," or "The Woodlanders," gives too much play to cruel accident, and therefore an air of unreality to the tenser moments of the plots. Our critical emphasis in the past has been wrong. It should, to follow Hardy's own words, be set not upon the idea, the suggested explanation of misfortune, but upon the living creatures in his novels and poems alike. It is the characters he wrought in pity, and, it would appear, in hope, that make him a great man in our modern world, although only once did he pass beyond the bounds of his primitive Wessex. The novelist of pity and its poet, not the spokesman for pessimism, is the title I solicit for him.

Tributes from American and English Writers

"A FEW years ago one of the 'extreme modernists' expressed what he seemed to believe was a new and lofty resolution. Delighting in his discovery that the complete frankness desirable in novelists had become possible, he exclaimed, '*Now*, we shall write of everything!' The days of protection for the *jeune fille* were over, he meant; spades were to be called by the longest and ugliest words, right to her face; the new freedom had arrived, and realism was at last to be produced in the English language.

Among the important manifestations he thus ignored was Mr. Hardy, who is a manifestation so important, it may be said, that he belongs to the history of English literature; but the omission becomes most striking when we recall that he had already written of everything. Probably the extreme modernist forgot him because Mr. Hardy wrote of everything beautifully."

Booth Tarkington



Corfe Castle, Dorset
The "Corvsgate"—*The Hand of Ethelberta*

Drawing by Paul Meylan for Harper's Magazine



THE "WEATHERBURY" COTTAGE, NEAR PUDDLETOWN
The Cottage of Gabriel Oak—*Far From the Madding Crowd*

Drawing by Paul Meylan for Harper's Magazine

"THOMAS HARDY is the last of the great Victorians. Like Dickens, he has given us a portrait gallery of Immortals, and the fact that these have not, and are not likely to have, the popularity of Dickens's characters is probably due to their standing closer to life and lacking those elements of exaggeration and caricature which impress a book-personality on the minds of the average reading public.

He has, moreover, what the great Victorians had not—a sense of the personality of place. Under his pen an enormous area of rural England has come alive in a way that has not happened in the books of any other author, for George Eliot largely ignored places in her dealings with people. Hardy, however, is an adept at conveying the personality of place. He also has the power of combining persons and places into one harmony, and of weaving his story of human joys and sorrows into the changes of the earth as the story of the Seasons is told."

Sheila Kaye-Smith

"IT is hard to believe that Americans can deprive themselves of the pleasure, the exaltation, of reading Hardy. For a young—at least youngish

—writer to 'recommend' Hardy would be impertinence, and I am merely joining a majority of intelligent readers when I assert that Hardy is probably the greatest living novelist. A hundred years from now he will be distinctly seen as one of the few geniuses of all prose fiction.

There is in Hardy such a combination of nobility with closeness to earth, of dignity with quick humanity, as can be equaled only in one or two of the Russians. 'Jude' and 'Tess' and 'The Return of the Native' are revelations of somber splendor which yet is never ponderous, which even to the most timorous romantic is forever 'interesting.' The boy Jude, reluctant to scare the crows, looking to the distant towers of Oxford—these are scenes which remain more brilliantly than one's own experience.

The other day a friend asked me in what writer he could best find great and original vision charged with warm humaneness. I suggested Thomas Hardy.

If I were an Oxonian I should hunt through slightly dusty classics now for a neat sliver of valedictory Latin to signify 'Thus to a crowned one a disciple dares gives testimony.'"

Sinclair Lewis

"EVER since I began to look over books in a bookstore in America, it seems to me I have encountered Hardy in one or another of his splendid pictures of Wessex life, along with Stevenson, Dickens, Ouida, Hugo and Thackeray. And except for Hugo and Thackeray I am by no means satisfied that he was in the best company. Mentally and emotionally and as a painter of the human scene he seems to me to outrank most of his contemporaries. I rank him with but one other, really—Feodor Dostoievsky. 'The Brothers Karamazov' and 'Crime and Punishment' are as individual as 'A Pair of Blue Eyes,' 'The Woodlanders' and 'Jude the Obscure,' but no more so. And they are far from being as poignant. In many respects, unless we return to Euripides and Sophocles he is quite alone—a great Greek wandering in a modern and hence an alien world."

Theodore Dreiser

"NO man living has achieved that stern marble beauty of Hardy's prose. No man living has treated the elemental tissues of life with hands so calm and immortal. He is the supreme giant doing in serenity the things we lesser folk

have been striving to do with sweat and blood, and failing all the time.

You might as well try to popularize Æschylus as Thomas Hardy; the Greek being the only writer in the world's history with whom he may, in some sense, be bracketed.

You can degrade him, of course. This, as far as my newspaper reading permits me to judge, has been done in a certain film, when the most exquisitely tragic figure in our literature is taken to a modern vulgar night-club. But there, quite possibly, she was supposed to dance to a syncopated version of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata played by a negro jazz band. Any fool can soil.

Comparison in art is the joy of the acute but little mind. If I were to say that Hardy was the greatest world novelist of the nineteenth century, people would clamor out the name of Dickens. But Dickens sits enthroned in the Valhalla of the Immortals between Cervantes and Shakespeare. When my revered Master joins that glorious company, it will be the great Greeks who will come to him with hands outstretched in welcome."

W. J. Locke

"THOMAS HARDY, in my opinion, is not merely the greatest living English writer, and not merely one of the greatest English writers of any period—he is one of the world's greatest writers of any period. I have held this view for years, and I see no reason for altering it. His literary life now reaches over more than half a century, and during those fifty years he has published nothing that does not show great creative and emotional power, and nothing that is not beautiful. Further, his inventive resource in the conduct of a story has never been surpassed, and at its best his style attains the most poignant beauty. If I had to name the finest English novel I should undoubtedly choose 'The Woodlanders.' Like certain supreme masters Thomas Hardy is various. We have his poetry, we have his novels; but we have also his short stories, in different veins, and they must be put in the same rank with the novels. And above all, we have 'The Dynasts,' a play—or rather a dramatic sequence—which stands quite by itself, a work gigantic, overpowering, and unique. I have used strong language about Thomas Hardy, but I could not say less."

Arnold Bennett

Bibl. Jag

"IT seems incredible, but nevertheless it is true, that Mr. Hardy was at one time considered 'far less surely a master of his art' than a half-forgotten writer named William Black. The phrase is taken from a contemporary history. Since that day literary taste in England has improved. It would now be impossible to respect any critic who denied that Mr. Hardy was a great novelist. He is not only a great novelist; he is the greatest of all English novelists. There is not one of them who approaches Mr. Hardy in his own field—that wide and tremendously rich field of human nature. There is not one of them with Mr. Hardy's superb tragic gift. Not one with his racy humor or his power of so describing aspects of nature that they heighten the poignancy of his emotional theme. Mr. Hardy is a poet, and his novels are charged with poetry; he is a natural dramatist; and he has a glorious mercy for human beings that is god-like. To read one of his books is to be so moved, to experience such revelation of life, that one is overwhelmed. Life in these books is not merely depicted or analyzed or explained. It is created

anew, so powerful is the imagination of the writer, and so irresistible is his power."

Frank Swinnerton

"OF the bright array of eminent Victorian British novelists only one remains alive—Thomas Hardy. It is not the dignity of age that gives him his present commanding position in literature; it is the simple fact, that of all living English novelists, none can possibly be considered his rival. We may indeed truthfully omit the word English; there is no writer in the world to-day whose prose fiction is of equal value."

William Lyon Phelps

Biographical

THE principal facts of the life of Thomas Hardy can be set down briefly, for outwardly at least it has been—for a man of such extraordinary achievements — singularly quiet and uneventful.

He was born on the second day of June, 1840, in an ample thatch-roofed house at Upper Brockhampton, near Dorchester, in the heart of the Dorsetshire region which thousands of his readers have come to know as Wessex. His father was a fairly prosperous master-builder who traced his ancestry back to the Norman nobility. Thomas Hardy's formal education was meager; he went as a little boy to the primary school at Dorchester, did badly in his studies there and was considered backward and unambitious, received some tutoring from his mother and a governess, and with no more effective schooling than this began an architectural career at the age of sixteen as apprentice to an ecclesiastical architect, John Hicks.

At this time there was a widespread movement



Thomas Hardy
at the age of
twenty-one



"The most modern of
the moderns" at
eighty



Woolbridge House at Wool, Dorset

Scene of the Honeymoon of Tess and Angel Clare—*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

Drawing by Paul Meylan for Harper's Magazine

to modernize or "restore" the old Gothic churches of England, and in this æsthetically dubious process Mr. Hicks took an active part. His apprentice's main task was to sketch and measure the churches which were to be restored. In 1862 Mr. Hardy went to London to work in the office of Arthur Blomfield, a young architect prominent in the Gothic revival. The next year he won a prize offered by the Royal Institute of British Architects for an essay on "Colored Brick and Terra Cotta Architecture." But even before he had left the employ of Mr. Hicks of Dorchester his ambition (discouraged by his parents) had been to write poetry, and this ambition persisted at the expense of his interest in his profession. He never really completed his architectural training, never opened an office of his own, and in 1867 gave up architecture finally for literature. The chief significance of his architectural labors lies in the sense of plan which he acquired in them and later applied in the construction of his novels, and in the knowledge of local folklore which he picked up in his professional excursions about his native county.

Mr. Hardy's early efforts at writing gave little indication of his latent powers. He could not get

his poems published. In financial need, he turned to fiction because it promised to be more lucrative. His first novel, a crude attempt, was declined by a publishing house and laid aside on the advice of George Meredith. His second, "Desperate Remedies," was brought out anonymously in 1871 only on condition that he advance seventy-five pounds toward the expense of printing, and attracted no attention. In fact, not until "Far From the Madding Crowd" appeared, in 1874, did he win critical applause or popularity.

The next twenty-odd years Mr. Hardy devoted almost wholly to fiction. In 1874 he married Emma Lavinia Gifford; they lived first at Stourminster-Newton in Dorset, later in London and at Wimborne, and finally, after 1886, at "Max Gate," in Dorchester, believed to be the only house which Mr. Hardy ever designed himself. Beyond these bare facts there is little to record of this period. But it was a time of momentous production. Mr. Hardy had supplemented his restricted education with wide reading and study; he had acquired a remarkable knowledge and understanding of the Wessex country and its people; he had mastered by arduous practice the difficult technique of fiction. The result

was a series of transcendent novels, including "The Return of the Native" (1878), "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" (1891) and "Jude the Obscure" (1895).

Mr. Hardy's earliest ambition had been to write poetry, not fiction. He has said that he never wanted to write prose novels at all, but was forced by circumstances to manufacture them. Through the years of his great fiction period he turned from time to time to verse; and by his sixtieth year he had given up fiction entirely. During the past quarter century the greatest living English novelist has produced only verse. Mr. Hardy's poetry has not been widely popular, and most critics rate it below his fiction; but it has been intensely admired by a small and discriminating group of readers and there are those who claim that his chief poetic work, the poetic dramatic trilogy, "The Dynasts" (in three volumes, published, respectively, in 1904, 1906 and 1908), will outlive all else that he has given us.

The first Mrs. Hardy died in 1912. In 1914 Mr. Hardy married Florence Emily Dugdale, a writer. All these years he has continued to live quietly and unobtrusively at Max Gate, withdrawn from the world; writing a little fine poetry

from time to time; receiving honors such as the Order of Merit (1909) and honorary degrees from Oxford, Aberdeen, and Cambridge; dodging interviewers and the fierce light of publicity; and witnessing the firm entrenchment of his reputation as the preëminent figure of his time in English letters.

"The Most Modern of the Moderns"

BY W. L. COURTNEY
Editor of *The Fortnightly Review*

IF the great figure of Thomas Hardy dominates our contemporary scene in his double office as novelist and poet we are bound to admit that in his case there can be no question whether he is to be described as an Ancient or a Modern. He is both old and young—indeed, he is the most Modern of Moderns. His first verse was written when Palmerston was the Queen's Prime Minister, somewhere about 1865, and his first novel was put before the critics in 1871, some years before Disraeli brought out his last novel. Technically, therefore, he belongs to the Grand Old Men of yesterday; he is a Victorian in a literal acceptation of the term. And yet Victorian as a descriptive epithet seems in no sense to be applicable to him; he is a Georgian poet—a seer, a prophet, a philosopher with a good many messages for our young men. Time means nothing for him; he is the same yesterday and to-day and to-morrow. . . .

Hardy has always said that his characters were taken direct from the countryside in which he lived. Apropos of "Tess of the d'Urbervilles," he said not long ago:

"*Tess, I only saw once in the flesh. I was walking along one evening and a cart came along in which was seated my beautiful heroine, who, I must confess, was urging her steed along with rather unnecessary vehemence of language. She colored up very much when she saw me, but—as a novelist—I fell in love with her at once and adopted her as my heroine. Girls resembling the three dairymaids in* Tess *used to get me to write their love letters for them when I was a little boy.*"

Books by Thomas Hardy

NOVELS

	First Published
DESPERATE REMEDIES	1871
UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE	1872
A PAIR OF BLUE EYES	1873
FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD *(Cornhill Magazine)*	1874
THE HAND OF ETHELBERTA	1876
THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE	1878
THE TRUMPET MAJOR	1880
A LAODICEAN	1881
TWO ON A TOWER	1882
THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE	1886
THE WOODLANDERS	1887
TESS	1891
JUDE THE OBSCURE	1895
THE WELL BELOVED	1897

SHORT STORIES

WESSEX TALES	1888
A GROUP OF NOBLE DAMES	1891
LIFE'S LITTLE IRONIES	1894

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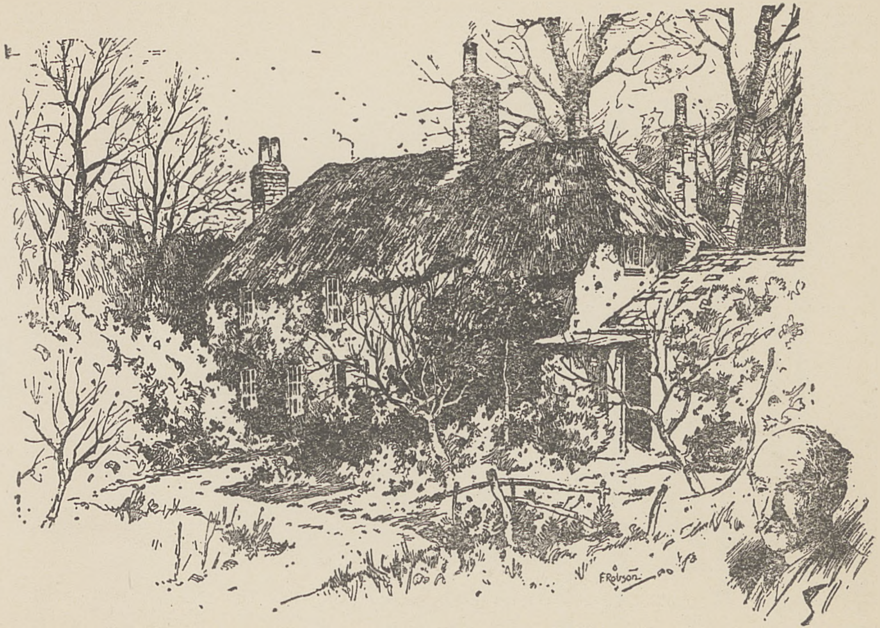
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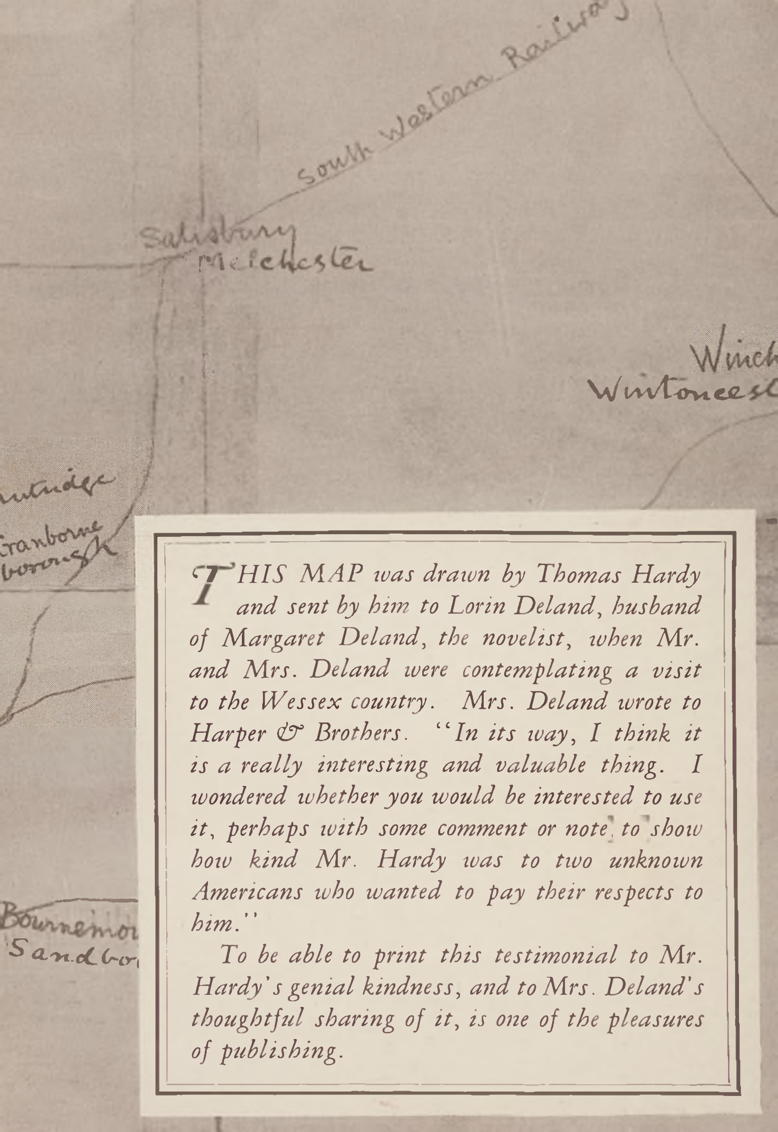
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THOMAS HARDY'S BIRTHPLACE
IN THE WESSEX COUNTRY

BIBLIOTHECA UNIV. JAGIELL. CRACOVIENSIS



THIS MAP was drawn by Thomas Hardy and sent by him to Lorin Deland, husband of Margaret Deland, the novelist, when Mr. and Mrs. Deland were contemplating a visit to the Wessex country. Mrs. Deland wrote to Harper & Brothers. "In its way, I think it is a really interesting and valuable thing. I wondered whether you would be interested to use it, perhaps with some comment or note to show how kind Mr. Hardy was to two unknown Americans who wanted to pay their respects to him."

To be able to print this testimonial to Mr. Hardy's genial kindness, and to Mrs. Deland's thoughtful sharing of it, is one of the pleasures of publishing.

po dezynfekcji